

When RiotGrrl Met Soft Boi by desparetlyseekingsun

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Multi, Someone stop me, boy bands!!!, emo probably, femme punk!!!, probably the mid2000s, stranger things, the AU literally NO ONE WANTS OR ASKED FOR EXCEPT MY EMO ASS, thing like ATL soft boi vibes i guess

Language: English

Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler, Maxine "Max" Mayfield/Lucas Sinclair

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2021-03-08

Updated: 2021-04-26

Packaged: 2022-04-01 01:33:41

Rating: Mature

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 3

Words: 3,344

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

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The big fat early 2000's emo boy band x femme punk band AU that literally no one wants or asked for!!

Or

El Hopper has had a song in her for her entire life. Sometimes the creative spark threatens to burn her alive, it shines so bright within her. Mike Wheeler is a hopeless romantic who's expectations are about as unrealistic as the love songs he writes. When their bands cross paths, will they be able to see eye to eye? Or are their differences too great to overcome?

1. Prologue

Author's Note:

um hello?

so here's the things,,, I've been an avid reader for years, and I've finally gotten up the courage to write my own fic!!! That said, this idea seems a weird place to start. I've had the idea for a while, and I just want to see if anything comes of it. So, leave me some reviews if you wouldn't mind terribly :)

Chapter 1 to come.

Enjoy!

Prologue:

El Hopper never thought that she would end up in this situation: caught between her love for someone and her work. She had always known that she was an artistic soul, but that knowledge was amplified tenfold when she started her band. Between herself and her best friend, Max, the band Not Your Lover was formed. What started as an all-night feminist bitch out led to them leaving podunk Hawkins for good. Now, two years later, they're on the brink of everything: of fame, fortune, the freedom to say what needs to be said. There's just one problem: El's in love and she's scared out of her mind.

2. You Again

Notes for the Chapter:

hi! so I've decided to pursue this idea a little. I'm quite intimidated and this is my first fic, so please go easy on me! I hope you enjoy!

Good god, I'm too old for this shit. As she tried to navigate through the throngs of clearly underage patrons, El Hopper was struck by the fact that her internal monologue was much older than herself. At the ripe old age of twenty-two, she couldn't believe how often these thoughts passed through her consciousness. She loved to party as much as the next person, but the stink of cheap alcohol and being rubbed up on by little teenagers hardly sounded like a good time. She had found her scene earlier in her teens, had found refuge in the unlikeliest of places. Or rather, places that no one (herself included) would have expected.

"Jesus El, move your ass before we get trampled", grumbled Max behind her.

"Dude, I'm trying. It's not exactly easy trying to part the crowd when you're 5'3", El mumbled back. Sure, she had absolutely no problem putting anyone in their place, but Max was different. Max, her fearless friend, who spoke and played bass and sang and lived and loved with abandon. Throughout their tumultuous upbringing in small-town Indiana, Max and El had become the sort of friends that could just be together. They could scream or sit in silence, and either would be just fine with the pair. The club they found themselves fighting through this night was an important stop for El and Max. It was a seedy 18 and up club in an trying-too-hard-to-be-artsy part of Indianapolis. The city was cool, but only if you weren't trying so damn hard to act like you matched. But they weren't here to socialize. They were here to perform and to size up the competition. As of the last month, El and Max had been on an extended road trip to New York, where they would be performing at an up-and-coming emo/punk music festival. The three-day event started small at a liberal arts college about ten years ago, but had grown with the dawn of MySpace and primitive advertisements. And they, two girls from

Cowtown, USA were listed to perform there in less than a month! The road to this point had been nothing short of tumultuous. Between convincing their respective families to let them pursue music full-time, balancing graduating high school, and kicking the asses of anyone who dared to question them, their lives had been hectic and painful. It was huge to even get a spot, and yeah it had been a fluke, but they'd worked too hard to blow it now.

Back in her reality, El was finally able to climb the stairs and get backstage. Their set had been earlier, and it was a little more rocky than they would have liked. The vibe of their music was unpolished on its own, but that didn't mean it had to be sloppy all the time. El, a longtime singer and guitarist, thrashed and screeched some lyrics, while others were delivered with a grace that made the audience want to cry. It was an interesting dichotomy, but one that earned them a spot in the festival. Max backed her on drums, which was good for the aggression she was constantly suppressing. Her upbringing was chaotic and abusive, and while she continued to heal and work, the anger she felt could threaten to decimate her and everyone around her. El felt her pain differently, but she wasn't sure it was better or healthy at all. In a few minutes, the next band would take the stage. Max had let slip earlier that it was another festival band, doing a similar build up as the girls themselves. *Some shit emo boy band from the area*, she'd called them, *a local favorite*. El wanted to sneer at the idea alone, these little bleeding heart emo boys who were actually just as douchey and sexist as any football play Chad. Guys like... Mike. So what if he had been her best friend before Max moved to Hawkins? So what if it broke her heart when they drifted apart? So what if it still haunted her when he moved away for good, and left her behind, confirming her worst suspicions: she wasn't worth the aggravation.

As she moved behind the heavy blue curtain, stained with cigarette smoke and age, she had the oddest sensation, a heaviness all around her, a sense of being watched in the best possible way. She hadn't felt it in years, not since the days of Hawkins Elementary School lunches spent hiding in the library with a Mike Wheeler who hadn't grown into any part of himself yet.

Flashback

El was eight, and couldn't understand anything. Why her mom was gone, why Hopper was always so mad, why everything made her so sad. There had to be a reason why every day felt long and pointless, and why she couldn't sit still but hated to have a moment to actually think. Maybe she was just crazy. She moved through the library stacks alone, tripping over her Converse, a little too big for her petite feet. Tube socks sagged below her knees, no matter how hard she tugged them back up. Her pink dress was dirty and wrinkled from the fight she'd just won on the playground. Stacy and her group sneered at her, and all it took was Stacy's overly loud and obnoxious voice gossiping about her mom to make El stop in her tracks and knock her lights out. Stacy was a priss, so her fight back was feeble and in vain. El was worried that maybe she took too much pride in knocking her down. Maybe she was bad. That thought was suddenly interrupted by a pitiful sniffing coming from behind the fairy tale section. El's footfalls were quiet on the carpeted floor, and as she peered around a steel bookcase, she saw the little boy for the first time. His appearance spoke to a tussle as well; his thick black hair was pushed to one side and mussed, his pale cheeks were dusted with dirt and his pants had a tear in them, from which El could see blood seeping out. Just as well, El thought. The pants were far too short for his lanky frame. Her mother used to call this a "growth spurt". The thought could have made her tear up. "Shit, what happened to you?" It came out without her even thinking it. She regretted it immediately. The boy looked up, stifling a startled gasp. I scared him. Bad bad bad. Instantly, she wanted to make it up to him. "I'm sorry, okay? I didn't mean to scare you. Are you okay?" she amended. It was interesting to watch him try to decide if El was a bully too, if he should start running or yell for a teacher. His faint dark brows drew up in the middle, and his chapped red lips pursed. In a word, his face screamed distrust. "Yeah, I'm fine. What's wrong with you?" he shot back. Okay, so he wasn't so scrawny after all. He had some fire in him too, which surprised El. It shouldn't have, but it did. People who cry are much braver than some who don't. "I knocked out Stacy and she tried to pull my hair," stated El, with a pride that made her worry some more. Something changed in Mike's face then. She recognized the expression. Respect. "Stacy made fun of me. She called me Frogface in science. Everyone looked and when my face got red, they laughed even harder." El could see new tears welling in his eyes, and something in her said that she should be nice to the boy. "I like frogs.

They're cool." Okay, maybe not that. El immediately regretted what she'd said. In her attempt to comfort him, she'd just confirmed that he looked like a frog. But as she panicked, she heard a guffaw come out of his silly chapped mouth. The SHHHHH of the library came immediately, but it was too late. Now El and the boy were double over, trying desperately to stifle their giggles. Sunlight filtered through the bookshelves, and a calmness flooded through El, a state which she hadn't known in a while. "I'm Mike," said the boy without warning. His eyes were still creased with leftover laughter, and his crooked smile presented itself. "Mike Wheeler". He extended a twig-like arm, parchment skin splattered with faint freckles. "El Hopper", she'd replied. And that was that. Now they had bonded, and now they were friends. El and Mike, against the world.

End Flashback

She looked up from her scuffed boots, back in the feeling of pleasant familiarity. It was like coming home, but she wasn't sure how or why. And then he was there. Oh, so this is what you've been doing since you split. And shit, he's looking right at her, with the same confused pout he wore all those years before. He opened his mouth to speak, to do something, say anything, and took a breath.

Notes for the Chapter:

So?? Thoughts? Literally I'd be so jazzed if anyone would let me know their thoughts! Also, apologies for any grammatical errors! College is hard, life is harder, but I really wanted to get this chapter up!

3. It's Always Weird

Previously on *When RiotGrrl Met Soft Boi*

She looked up from her scuffed boots, back in the feeling of pleasant familiarity. It was like coming home, but she wasn't sure how or why. And then he was there. Oh, so this is what you've been doing since you split. And shit, he's looking right at her, with the same confused pout he wore all those years before. He opened his mouth to speak, to do something, say anything, and took a breath.

~~~~~El POV~~~~~

“El?”. Her name is a question on Mike’s lips. In the time it took her to confirm that yes, this is Mike Wheeler, and yes, he recognizes her too, they seem to have floated towards one another. Around them, the bustle of backstage before a show rages- mics are lost and sound check reverbs and bounces off the walls while people yell for water and help and sound equipment- and none of this seems to register for either one of them. How long had it been since she’d seen him? How many years? In those infinite few moments, El could remember everything. She remembered flashlights and the Wheeler basement, the fights because Mike was an angry little boy and she was an even angrier little girl, homework help and “promise”. Oh god, why was this happening right now?

#### Flashback

It’s seventh grade at Hawkins Middle School, and El is sobbing onto the shoulder of a gawky Mike in the hallway of the Snowball. The annual winter dance was something that El would never, ever, *ever*, admit she wanted to attend. Even less likely was her willingness to admit that she wanted Mike to ask her. But he didn’t because he didn’t like her, he liked Stacy. Mike would never see her as anything more than her best friend, and El knew that. So why did it make her so sad? And why did she agree to go to the Snowball with Troy?

Everything had been going well enough that night. With a hefty dose

of coaxing and puppy eyes on El's part, she had convinced her dad, Hopper, to take her shopping for a dress to wear. El knew what she wanted, but it didn't seem to exist on the clearance rack of their local department store. The year was 1997, and El was in a phase of worshipping John Hughes movies. She wanted the dress that Molly Ringwald wore as a bridesmaid in *16 Candles*. When she didn't find what she wanted, she decided to take matters into her own hands. Buying a cheap dress with enough frills and lace to kill someone, she took it home and got to work. The sewing machine in her room got plenty of use over the weekend, and by the night of the dance, she had created something wholly bitchin.

As Hop pulled to Hawkins Middle School (in the police cruiser, good lord), even the grizzled man could feel El's excitement radiating through the stink of cigarettes in the car.

"Okay, kid. I'll be right back here at 10. No funny business, alright? What's our rule?"

"We're not stupid," responds El, but shes distractedly darting her eyes around, trying to scope out her date. Frankly, she'd been surprised and a bit grossed out by Troy asking her to the dance, but she'd wanted to go so badly. Was it so much to ask for a night where everything felt a little more normal, and she felt happy and free? She wasn't sure anymore.

El's footfalls fell in time with a lovesick ballad (a little too heavy on the synth) as she presented her dance ticket and walked into the gymnasium. For the night, the room is magical- tinsel and white lights hang from the rafters, and the dimmed lighting gives the room an ethereal winter feel. El wishes she could soak up a moment, just to remember how utterly normal she felt in that moment. She was wearing *her* dress and her hair was behaving (for once) and she had a date.

"Hey, Hopper! Come here!"

Oh not now. Stacy and her omnipresent followers beckoned to her from the side of the gym, a fact which was odd enough. They hadn't spoken since... well, ever. Hesitantly, El made her way across the dancefloor, but all too soon, too soon Stacy was yelling "Well if it



isn't the school slut!"

The word rings out over the expanse of the gym and for a moment, El is sure this night isn't real. There's no way, this is just a bad dream. Only it kept going.

"So, Hopper, how does it feel to be the third girl Troy has banged this year? You know that's the only reason he asked you to this stupid thing, right?" The sneer on Stacy's face would be comical if this moment wasn't real, please God, made it not real.

El's frozen, but her face is so hot from shame, and she can't breathe. She can't think of a comeback or a way to even look confused because none of this is true. So, she does what she knows how to do. She runs.

## **End flashback**

"El Hopper, is that you?" The question comes again, and El is back with her memories. Back in the present... with Mike Wheeler.

"Hi, Mike." She sizes him up then, and she thinks a few things. He looks marginally the same, but not by much. She notes that he's grown even more, easily topping 6'3". He's still thin, but with the telltale muscle of a young man. His shoulders are broad and taper into a long torso with longer legs. And his face, holy hell. Chiseled is the word she thinks of first. Gone is the baby face that made his expression perpetually pouty. Dark hair that's a bit too long, which contrasts just so against pale skin. He's midnight and starlight and El is blind.

"Oh my God, I knew it was you! How are you? What are you doing here? Wha--"

*1 minute until curtain, 1 minute.*

"I think you're about to go on. Break a leg, Mike." And El walks away, because she's already panicked and hurting too much. She

breezes past him, and he stares dumbly after her.

~~~~~Mike POV~~~~~

“Son of a bitch!” Dustin’s curse is repeated over and over as he tries to find his wireless mic after the set. Mike is panting, the exhilaration of performing still not lost on him, but he may as well be in Bermuda for all the attention he’s giving to his surroundings. He’s run into any wall he comes near, while an overall dazed expression has covered his features for the past hour.

“Dustin, man, chill out. The house knows what’s ours, they’ll get it back to us.” Ever the voice of calm and reason, Will tries to comfort his friend, who is currently pulling at his curly hair in frustration.

“No, Will, they won’t! And would you like to know why? Because it was a certain bassist’s responsibility to do equipment check with the house managers, but guess who disappeared until curtain, thus ensuring the disappearance of my mic? MIKE, that’s who!” Dustin is in hysterics now, flapping his arms and screeching. His name snaps him out of the stupor, and Mike’s clever response is “.....what?”. Very nice.

“SEE? He has no idea what’s even happening!”

“Dustin, chill the fuck out. It’s a stupid wireless mic, and it looked dumb anyways” Lucas comes back from the bathroom, and from the looks of it, he’s having none of the dramatics tonight.

Like a firecracker, Dustin is easy to light with a short burn, so he wanders off, grumbling about the “greats and their wireless mics” and Mike stands there, still mystified by El and the mics.

“Dude, what’s your problem?” Lucas is the first to ask, but Will is quick to echo his concerns.

Immediately, Mike feels somewhat guilty. As the de-facto leader of the band, he can’t help but feel like he’s let the guys down.

“I’m sorry guys. Really. It’s just... something happened before the

show and it kinda shook me up?” It comes out as a question, but there’s no question there. Mike is rocked from seeing El Hopper, former best friend and childhood crush. He never got the guts to tell her, and leaving so suddenly ruined his chances, but Mike always had the suspicion that it didn’t matter much to El. After all, she was the one who called off their friendship all those years ago. Even so, couldn’t he have a pass to be weirded out? Seeing someone from a different part of your life is always weird, right? Right?

“Was it the girl you were talking to before the show? You seemed a little, um distracted?” He was trying to be kind, but anyone could see Will was trying to make it out to be better than it was.

“Yeah, it was. Her name is El. El Hopper” and he says it with a reverence one often associates with saying “Dr. so and so” or whatever. Either way, the tone makes Lucas and Will exchange a look.

~~~~~EL POV~~~~~

“Okay, what the hell is your problem, huh? You’ve been a ghost since we got back!” Max says it out of nowhere, as the two are winding down in their motel room. El honestly thought she’d been putting on a good performance, and the knowledge that she hadn’t fooled Max is more than a little worrying.

“Nothing, I’m just tired Max.”

“Bullshit. Tell me.” Well, what could she expect? Max hated bullshitters.

“I saw someone I didn’t want to see tonight, okay? It confused me. I just need to sleep and I’ll be fine. Now go to bed.” El shuts off the light, hoping to stop things in their tracks.

“Oh no no, miss. We’re going to talk about this, because obviously you need to!” Okay, no such luck.

“Jesus, Max. What do you want me to say?” Oh no, it’s coming up. The anger. The resentment. The rage. “Not everyone wants to discuss everything to death! Just leave me the hell alone!” She says it and regrets it in the same breath. She shouldn’t ever speak to Max like that, not after everything, and not with those words. But she doesn’t get to apologize. Max gets up and slams the door behind her before she can.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

ahhhhhh I've been gone too long and I'm sorry! no excuses, just writer's block. I've wanted to write this story for so long and now I am and I HATE HOW ITS TURNING OUT AHA

Also finals are kicking my ass and life is just crazy. hoping that things will settle soon so I can get in some quality writing time. that said, I'm working on a few one shots, so keep your eyes peeled for those! leave reviews so I can have a reason to keep working on this. I may just scrap it to be honest, but if enough people don't want that, then I'll try to make it better lol.

okay, that's all. stay well xxx